

Seamlessness Policy Group Dual Enrollment/Dual Credit Issues

Background

Clarification of terms:

- “Dual enrollment” refers to the enrollment of high school students in postsecondary classes regardless of whether course credit is awarded at the high school or the college level.
- “Dual credit” refers to enrollment of high school students in college coursework for which both high school and college credit is awarded.

For example, a high school student taking a college course in an area within the high school curriculum (such as a foreign language, upper division mathematics, or English) is likely to receive both high school and college credit. A high school student enrolled in a college course outside the high school curriculum (such as various technical subjects) may (or may not) receive college credit for that course but is unlikely to receive credit toward a high school diploma. A high school student taking a remedial college offering (such as remedial reading or mathematics) is unlikely to receive college credit, but might receive high school credit for this work. The Council on Postsecondary Education’s policy is to allow local school districts and postsecondary institutions to determine their dual enrollment and credit policies and arrangements.

Postsecondary institutions report high school students enrolled in their institutions to the Council but school districts do not report whether high school credit is granted to these students. Therefore, the Council can monitor dual enrollment numbers but not those receiving dual credit. The number of high school students dually enrolled in postsecondary coursework has increased dramatically over the past three years, from 4,554 in 2000-01 to 11,040 in 2001-02 to 17,187 in 2002-03. Fall 2003 dual enrollment figures will be available January 2004.

The Discover College program at Owensboro Community and Technical College exemplifies the most systematic approach to dual enrollment in Kentucky. Discover College targets two distinct student groups for dual enrollment, embracing two models usually operating separately in other states:

- The “early college” model, which focuses on accelerated high school students (usually juniors and seniors), offers them challenging coursework in high school and up to two years of college credits by the time of high school graduation.
- The “middle college” model, which focuses on capable but disengaged (and therefore “at risk”) high school students (as early as sophomore year), induces them, through on-campus college opportunities (whether remedial or credit-bearing), to stay in school and enroll in college.

Through our state and local P-16 Councils, we have encouraged dual enrollment. But significant policy issues remain for the Council to consider:

What the Council Can Do

- **Policy Analysis:** Should the Council conduct a systematic study of the impact of dual enrollment/dual credit on student success? We do not know the effect of dual enrollment on postsecondary persistence and graduation rates. A research project to examine the effect of dual enrollment on three years of cohorts (2000-01, 2001-02, 2002-03) would be broken down as follows:
 - High school students enrolled in courses included within or beyond the pre-college curriculum, which are likely to increase their readiness for college or for which they might receive both high school and college credit (such as upper level [high school] mathematics, laboratory sciences, English, or foreign languages).
 - High school students enrolled in coursework having no relation to the high school curriculum for which they would be unlikely to earn dual credit (such as welding).
 - High school students enrolled in remedial coursework (mathematics, reading, and writing) offered by postsecondary institutions, designed to provide alternative learning paths that will increase their chances of graduating from high school.

The study would determine whether dual enrollment of high school students in college courses leads to greater-than-expected high school completion, college-enrollment, and college persistence rates as compared with high school students who have not taken college courses while in high school. It would evaluate whether the types of college courses in which high school students enroll have a differential impact.

- **Fiscal Policy:** Should the Council develop a statewide policy for funding dual credit courses? Current funding policies at both the K-12 and postsecondary levels discourage dual enrollment arrangements between postsecondary institutions and their neighboring school districts. Some superintendents and high school principals are reluctant to allow dual enrollments for fear of losing Average Daily Attendance (ADA) funding. (The KDE insists that districts need not lose ADA for dual enrollment.) Postsecondary institutions receive partial Full Time Equivalent (FTE) compensation for each high school student enrolled (one-third FTE) but they receive no tuition reimbursement unless students or districts pay. A recent bill filed for this legislative session would allow high school seniors to use KEES funds for dual enrollment courses.
- **Distance Learning:** Should the Council promote a partnership between the Kentucky Virtual University and the Kentucky Virtual High School to increase access to dual credit/dual enrollment opportunities? The KVHS, a program of the KDE, provides opportunities for Kentucky students to earn credit, recover credit and receive supplemental education service through online learning. Partnering with local school districts, the KVHS offers coursework and services statewide that may not be available locally, including 19 advanced placement classes and four years of four foreign languages. A dual credit agreement has been proposed by the KVHS and Owensboro Community and Technical College, through which high school students could earn dual credit through the KVHS and the KCTCS. KVHS fees would apply; no college tuition fee would be charged.

- **Adult Education:** Should the Council develop policies that allow adult learners to better access college courses (especially remedial courses) to promote college going and to allow college students to access adult education programs to address remediation needs? Many of the policy issues arising from dual enrollment of high school students in postsecondary education are similar to those facing adult learners seeking postsecondary resources. Some adult education providers in Kentucky partner with local two-year institutions, using postsecondary remedial resources to augment adult education in what are termed “wrap-around” programs. Often they use PLATO (an online curriculum) to enhance and accelerate the learning experience of adults. Local evidence suggests that these services lead to greater postsecondary enrollment and persistence rates but no systematic study has been conducted.

Traditional college students in need of remediation also could benefit from access to adult education program resources to avoid paying college tuition for remedial college courses that do not count toward graduation. Better articulation of adult education and college remediation programs, online support, and assessments could produce a competency based approach that would allow all students to move more quickly into credit-bearing college work.

What the Council Can Do in Partnership with Other Agencies

- **Adult Education:** Should the Council work with the Kentucky Board of Education and state and federal government officials to change policies and laws that make it difficult for severely at-risk high school students to access adult education/GED programs? Funding restrictions (federal and state) impede the use of adult education personnel and resources to “capture” highly at-risk high school students. Currently, high school students who are highly unlikely to graduate (e.g., earning very few credits by junior year) cannot utilize adult education resources while in high school. If they do drop out they cannot take the GED until their high school class graduates. The result of the latter policy is thousands of dropouts caught in a holding pattern for two or more years before being able to take the GED as an alternate next step in their educational progress. The Council could take steps to modify state and federal laws/policies prohibiting the use of adult education resources for highly at-risk high school students. Other changes in policy would allow high school dropouts who are clearly not going to return and graduate to take the GED and, perhaps, go on to college.

Background Resource

<http://www.tc.columbia.edu/ccrc/PAPERS/Briefs/brief17.pdf>